

For the Children.

OFF THE LINE.

The boys stood up in the reading class—
A dozen or so—and each one said
That those at the foot should never pass,
Or find it easy to get up head.

Harry was studying; so were Jake,
Jim, and Robert, and Tom, and Jack;
For men of business they meant to make,
And it wouldn't do to be dull or slack.

There wasn't another boy on the line
More anxious than Jim to keep his place;
For to be at the head was very fine,
And to go down foot was a bad disgrace.

But Jim delighted in games of ball,
Polo, tennis, or tauter croquet,
And his mind was not on his books at all,
When he took his place in the class that day.

"I was his turn to read, and he started off
With an air attentive—a vain pretense;
For the boys around him began to cough
And nudge and chuckle at Jim's expense.

"You've skipped a line," whispered generous Ben,
Who often had helped in this way before,
"You've skipped a line," shouted Jim, and then,
Of course, the school-room was in a roar.

As down to the foot Jim went that day,
He learned a lesson that any child
Might have known; for we're sure to stray
If we try to be in two places at once.

Spot, when you sport, in an earnest way,
With a merry heart and a cheerful face;
But when at your books think not of your play,
Or else you'll certainly lose your place.

—Josephine Pollard, in *Harper's Young People*.

"Old Mrs. Sassafras."

A STORY FOR BOYS.

The air was very sweet in the woods.
A warm spring wind was blowing, and it
seemed to bring the sunshine with it
from the bald, shining hillside without,
into the damp, snow-spotted dusk of the
forest within. As she felt it, a smile broke
over the swarthy, toll-hardened face of an
old woman sitting on a log under the trees.

"Summer is coming," she said aloud,
and as though she were quite in the habit
of talking to herself, "Summer, when
for a while there won't be chop and
lug, and it won't be so hard to get
something to eat. I've earned enough
to-day," she continued, looking down
fondly into her apron and all old basket
which were filled with roots and blossoms,
"to keep me a month in summer."

She poked the things in the basket, and
a pleasant smell of fresh earth and pun-
gent roots rose from them.

"But I must go," she continued, rising
from the damp log on which she had been
sitting. "Not that anybody cares whether
old Mrs. Sassafras comes or whether she
goes—oh, no! They're all dead long ago
but the boy—and maybe he is dead, too,
by this time. Oh, what a life it is!"

She sank down again, and covered her
face with her hands; but the sound of
fresh young voices, which just then
sounded through the stillness, roused her
from her painful reverie.

"What luck!" cried one merry voice.
"Only a few liverwort blossoms, and a
half-dozen sickly May-flowers! Beautiful
half-baskets we shall have! But perhaps
we can buy some artificial ones at the
milliner's."

"The girls will get a plenty, I'll wager!"
said another. "But we've been every-
where that I can think of, and nothing
decent is to be found."

Just then they spied the old woman
sitting on the moss-covered log, and made
a simultaneous rush for her.

"Hallo, Mrs. Sassafras!" they cried,
with good-natured familiarity. "Got a
lot of sassafras, haven't you? Give us
some, do! And where can we find some
May-flowers? Do hurry up and tell us!"

"Oh, Mrs. Sassafras gave them an indul-
gent smile. She loved every one of them
for the sake of her own dear boy, for
whom she had slaved and deeded herself,
only, alas! to see him growing into a wild,
bad, ungrateful youth, who had finally
rewarded her love and patience by run-
ning away to sea when he was seventeen.

It had been five years since then, and she
had begun to despair of ever seeing him
again; but out of a humble and honest
heart she lived her daily life, working
hard, and helping others whenever she
had a chance; for the soul of old Mrs.
Sassafras, though it was in a rough and
homely body, was pure gold. The boys
never set their dogs on her, nor snowballed
her. If one of them had dared to try such
a thing it would have gone hard with
him, for the person of old Mrs. Sassafras
was sacred. And, as she not only sold
her roots and herbs for a price to the rich,
and to the doctors and apothecaries in the
large village some five miles distant, but
kept a stock constantly on hand for those
who were poor and needy like herself,
whom she was always willing to help, it
was no wonder all her neighbors liked
her, and that the boys brightened up the
moment they spied her through the
"chinks" between the trees.

"Old Margaret Sheban, as 'old Mrs.
Sassafras' really ought to have been
called, pulled out from her basket with
kindly promptness a fresh-dug stick of
sassafras and one of flag-root for each
boy, and then, shaking her sides with
suppressed laughter, she opened her apron,
and showed them Mayflowers—pink, and
dewy, and fragrant, till the boys shouted
with delight.

"Where'd you get 'em?"

"Oh, my! ain't they splendid?"

"You bet the girls won't get any like
them."

"Oh, hurry up! Where'd you find
'em?"

"Well," said the kind old creature, re-
covering herself, "it's a good way, and
you'll have to cross a swamp to get to
them; but they're there—plenty of them.
I've seen that hill? Well, just on the
other side of that hill is Bennett's sugar-
house, and beyond the maple-trees, in
among the pines, about half-way down
the hill, you'll find some, you see!"

Margaret Sheban nodded with smiling
assurance to the eager little group, who
turned clamorously in the direction that
she indicated, and forgetting to thank
her in their excitement, made off with a
rush and a scramble for the "hill" and
"Bennett's sugar house"; and there, to
be sure, where the pines were yielding up
sweet incense to the spring sun, and sing-
ing solemnly their everlasting chant, they
found even finer and dewier blossoms than
those which they had seen in old
Mrs. Sassafras's apron.

As they picked eagerly, gathering in
long, wandering sprays of the shy, precious
blossoms, they talked about old Margaret.

"What's her name, anyway?" said
Tom Merrill.

Harold Temple, who had happened to
hear and remember it, told him.

"But," he added, "They got to calling
her 'old Mrs. Sassafras' because she went
out so much for roots and herbs; and she
didn't mind it, so they kept it up. My!"
continued Harold, with true boyish en-
thusiasm, "I suppose she knows better
than to dig for snakeroot and orris and
ginseng and sassafras, and such, than any
man in town."

"She cleans house for us every spring
and fall," said another boy, with a con-
sequential air.

Then they picked on silently for a few
moments.

"I say," cried Harold suddenly, as
though a bright thought had struck him,
"Let's hang her a May-basket too! I'll
venture to say she hasn't had a May-bas-
ket for twenty years—and more too—if
she ever did!"

"Haven't got anything to put in it but
May-flowers, and she's got a lot of them,"
said Tom, doubtfully.

"I'll tell you!" exclaimed Harold after
a moment's thought; "let's get a big bas-
ket and fill it with things for her! That
would please her, I know; and we'd tell
people about it, and they'd all give some-
thing, I know."

"They would!" they all assented.

"We've got flowers enough now," said
one of the boys pretty soon. "Let's go
home and begin to fix old Mrs. Sassafras's
May-basket; for it will take quite a while
to get it up in good shape."

As it was now growing chilly, and the
shadows showed that the sun was on the
horizon, the boys concluded that they
would follow Harold's suggestion, so they
went racing and tumbling down the hill,
and were soon at the foot of it, and on a
well-known road leading to their homes.

Once there, their new project was re-
vealed to their elders, who received it
with almost unanimous approval. Old
Margaret's invariable kindness, her neat-
ness, her industry, her loneliness, her
humility—all combined to make her gen-
erally beloved, and "if the boys were
a-mind to get it up, why, they'd help."

So the boys went with a head with consid-
erable spirit, and by the next night, which
was the time when the May basket was to
be presented, they had collected some
valuable articles for it to hold.

Mr. Sims, the village store-keeper, had
presented the basket.

"She took care of my two girls many a
night when they had the typhoid fever,"
he said, "and never charged a cent for
doing it. I'm glad enough to do any-
thing for her." And many others felt in
the same way.

It was thought at first that a peck
basket would answer their purpose, but as
the contributions began to come in, a
bushel basket was substituted, and then
was heaped and running over before night.
A dress, a good shawl and apron, a stout
pair of rubber boots in which to make
her way more comfortably about the
swamps to collect her simples, groceries of
all sorts, and an envelope containing a
sum of money—these were a part of the
contents of the May basket. Oh, it was a
gift to gladden the heart of a much more
ambitious woman than old Mrs. Sassafras.

That night boys and girls were stealing
very quietly about the village streets, and
many a quick jerk of a door-bell, and
rapid retreat of the ringer, proclaimed
that some mossy basket, full of odorous
wild flowers, or perhaps something sweeter
still to the heart of the average boy and
girl, had been hung on the door-knob of a
favorite playmate; but the largest com-
pany of all was gathered near old Marg-
aret's humble cottage, on whose door-step,
shortly after nine o'clock, the May-basket
was deposited.

The dear old creature had been sitting,
with her head in her hands, beside her
fire, musing sorrowfully on her loneliness.

"Who is there," she thought, to care
for old Mrs. Sassafras! To be sure,
they're kind words for me, but if I should
die to-morrow, they would say only 'The
pit!' and go their ways. There's nobody
to drop a tear nor even a flower on my
grave; and the boy!—the boy!—he may be
at the bottom of the sea by this time!"

At this point in old Margaret's mourn-
ful reflections, she heard a knock that
might well have awakened the Seven
Sleepers—and she hurried to the door. A
candle flared in the hand she held above
her head, while she kept the other above
her eyes to shade them as she peered out
into the darkness. Not seeing anybody
she was about to retire, with a half-im-
patient thought of the mischievous boys
who would call a tired old woman to her
door for nothing, when her eye caught an
imposing white placard, black-lettered, on
top of the basket. She held her candle
down and it read:

"A May-basket for Mrs. Sassafras,
with her Neighbors' Love."

"It's the boys, bless 'em!" said old
Mrs. Sassafras with a happy grin, forget-
ting all her doleful thoughts of a few mo-
ments before, and she began to drag her
present in.

She was turning over its contents with
a pleased and bewildered expression upon
her face, and with all sorts of murmured
 ejaculations of love and gratitude upon
her lips, when she heard another knock,
and again flew to the door.

"What can it be?" she said. "Two
callers on a poor, lonely old lady like me
in one night! It never rains but it pours."

She opened the door, and the light fell
full on the figure of a tall, bronzed young
man. He stepped toward her, and she
set the candle down, as she looked with
pathetic, quivering eagerness into his face.
Then she gave a cry of joy, and fell into
his open arms.

"Mother, mother!" he said, while tears
coursed down his tanned and weather-
beaten face. "I've been a bad, ungrate-
ful boy; but I'm doing well, mother, now,
and I've come back to live with you, and
take care of you. Don't cry, mother,
your boy loves you; he's come back to
settle down and stay with you!"

Ah! that was a happy night in old Mrs.
Sassafras's little cottage, and how ashamed
she felt that she had had such hard
thoughts of the world!

The next day some of the boys met
their old friend, and they couldn't resist
saying, as she greeted them with a bright
smile: "How did you like the basket,
Mrs. Sassafras?"

"Oh, boys!" she cried, "you 'most
broke my heart with your kindness; I
indeed you did. But the best of it was,
your basket brought my son following
right along after it—my boy that's been
gone so many years."—Kate Oppon Clarke,
in *Christian Union*.

"Say, Mrs. Bunson," said a little girl
to a lady visitor, "do you belong to a
brass band?" "No my dear," "I thought
you did." "Why did you, my child?"

"Because, mamma said you was always
blowing your own horn, and I thought
you must belong to the band."

A GILVERSTON child, little Charlie, was
having a wrothy war with his nurse. His
father sang out: "Now, Charlie, are you
going to be quiet or shall I come with a
switch?" "Never mind the switch, papa,"
responded the youngster; "I can set her
right without your help."

SCHOOL-BOY'S COMPOSITION: "Enter-
prise is a good thing. Columbus enter-
prised America. If Columbus hadn't
done it we should be nowhere, for nobody
knows anything about America but the
Indians, and they wouldn't tell."

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nounce it to be the BEST REMEDY KNOWN TO MAN.

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Temperance.

A TEMPERANCE SONG.

You're tired of the tricks that are old and vain,
So much the better for you;
You're waiting for sunshine after the rain,
So much the better for you;
You're drunk till your heart is sick and sore,
Till hope has gone out and shut the door,
And you now have resolved to drink no more—
So much the better for you.

You've looked in the pit that is black with sin,
So much the better for you;
You're waiting for sunshine after the rain,
So much the better for you;
You've broken the bottle upon the stones,
And put new life in the old dry bones;
You've made an end to the children's moans—
So much the better for you.

You've bade an adieu to the social cup,
So much the better for you;
You'll go for your mates and lift them up,
So much the better for you;
You'll bless the cause whose strength and power
Have come to the rescue in this dark hour,
And made the earth a beautiful bower—
So much the better for you.

Tobacco.

Suffer me to write in all honesty, not as
a fault finder, but as one who loves the
truth and has been for long years endeavor-
ing to find the same and walk therein.
After what you have written and known,
it need not be said to you that Iowa is
passing through one of the severest bat-
tles ever known, and although the gov-
ernor and judges do not suit the tem-
perance people in their way of settling this
great question, the battle nevertheless is
being fought, and faith in God gives us
to see a great victory somewhere in the
future. I wish not now to speak so much
of the evil of intemperance in drink as
one of its tributaries. My home has been
in Iowa for nearly fifty years, and I am
now in my thirty-second in the itinerant
ministry. I have had some opportunity
of knowing of what I speak. My theme
is tobacco; not a favorable one I admit,
and yet this is more in the way of our
success both in the church and state than
many are willing to concede. The physi-
cian who said "his patient could have
been saved had he not poisoned his sys-
tem with tobacco," told a great truth, and
it may apply in more ways than one. At
Clear Lake, last year, a reformed inebri-
ate said "if he should indulge in